

PROVIDING EQUITABLE COMPENSATION FOR USEFUL
SUGGESTIONS OR INVENTIONS BY PERSONNEL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DECEMBER 1 (legislative day, NOVEMBER 18), 1943.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. O'MAHONEY, from the Committee on Public Lands and Surveys,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 1232]

The Senate Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1232) to provide equitable compensation for useful suggestions or inventions by personnel of the Department of the Interior, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the following amendment and with the recommendation that the bill, as amended, do pass.

On page 2, line 6, after the period add the following:

For the purposes of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed to set up in the Department a Board of Awards, the proceedings of which shall be available to the public.

This bill was suggested and recommended by the Secretary of the Interior under date of June 8, 1943, and his letter to the Vice President transmitting the proposed legislation is hereinbelow set forth in full and made a part of this report.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, June 8, 1943.

Hon. HENRY A. WALLACE,
President of the Senate.

MY DEAR MR. VICE PRESIDENT: A draft of a proposed bill to provide equitable compensation for useful suggestions or inventions by personnel of the Department of the Interior is submitted herewith.

I recommend that favorable consideration be given to the enactment of legislation adopting the provisions suggested in this draft.

The purpose of the proposed bill is to provide appropriate authority for the payment of cash rewards to officers or employees of the Department of the Interior for valuable suggestions or inventions. In order to promote the effectiveness and streamlining of the procedures used in handling the business of the Government, the Department, on December 1, 1942, established a committee to receive and consider suggestions for more efficient, economical, or improved ways of handling

its operations. In consequence of this action many worth-while ideas have been submitted by officers or employees with respect to matters falling without, as well as within, the scope of their particular duties, some of which will undoubtedly result in marked savings of time and effort or in substantial advantages to the Government along other lines. Furthermore, in order to secure for the people of the United States the full benefits of Government research and investigation in the extensive fields of scientific and technological investigation committed by law to the Department, regulations were adopted on November 17, 1942, which provide that each officer or employee shall assign to the United States all rights to any invention made by him within the general scope of his governmental duties as defined in the regulations, including all inventions in a substantial degree made or developed through any form of governmental aid.

Notwithstanding the considerable pecuniary gains accruing to the United States as a result of suggestions or inventions made by officers or employees of the Department of the Interior, the payment of appropriate rewards to the persons making these suggestions or inventions is now precluded by the statutory prohibitions against the payment of extra compensation to Government personnel unless specifically authorized by law (Rev. Stat., secs. 170, 1764, 1765; 5 U. S. C., secs. 51, 69, 70; act of June 20, 1874, 18 Stat. 107; 5 U. S. C., sec. 71). Because of these restrictions it is not now possible adequately to reward officers or employees of the Department for individual exercises of creative talent over and above the routine requirements of their positions. The establishment of an equitable basis for paying rewards to all personnel of the Department who by special effort make useful suggestions or inventions which become available to the United States, whether by virtue of the conditions of employment or in consequence of a voluntary donation, would be distinctly to the advantage of the Government. By holding out the promise of recognition in material form for the development and transfer to the United States of meritorious devices or procedures, a continuing incentive for the exercise of creative talent would be placed in operation, resignations of personnel in order to avoid turning over the prospective fruits of valuable discoveries would be discouraged, and the scientific, technological, and administrative services of the Department would be materially strengthened.

The proposed bill submitted herewith provides for the accomplishment of the foregoing objectives by authorizing the payment of cash rewards in reasonable amounts to officers or employees of the Department of the Interior who submit suggestions or inventions which are of such a nature that their adoption would result in improved technological or scientific processes or methods, or in improvements in the administration or operations of the Department. By so doing it would merely extend to the Department of the Interior an authority to pay cash rewards comparable to that granted the Navy and the War Departments to pay cash rewards for useful suggestions (act of July 1, 1918, 40 Stat. 718; 5 U. S. C., sec. 416; act of March 18, 1943, Public Law 11, 78th Cong.) and the authority granted the Post Office Department to pay such rewards for useful suggestions or inventions (act of May 14, 1937, 50 Stat. 157; 39 U. S. C., sec. 813).

The bill provides that the rewards paid to all officers or employees of the Department during any fiscal year shall not exceed \$20,000, and that the rewards paid to any one officer or employee during any fiscal year shall not exceed \$1,000, unless in exceptionally meritorious cases a greater amount is specifically appropriated for a named person without regard to this limitation. The provisions of the bill are intended to permit the granting of rewards to officers or employees who by reasons of the terms of their contracts of employment or of departmental regulations are under a duty to assign to the United States all rights in devices or procedures originated by them, as well as to officers or employees who are not under any such duty. Application of the bill is limited to suggestions or inventions made in the course of employment with the Government and after November 17, 1942, the date of the administrative order requiring the assignment of all inventions subsequently made by employees of the Department within the general scope of their governmental duties.

Adoption of the legislative proposals discussed in this letter would, I am convinced, result in pecuniary benefits to the United States substantially exceeding the modest outlays authorized.

The Bureau of the Budget has advised me that it has no objection to the presentation of this proposed legislation.

Sincerely yours,

HAROLD L. ICKES,
Secretary of the Interior.